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ISRAELI ATTITUDES ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND ON PEACE TERMS--ETC(U)
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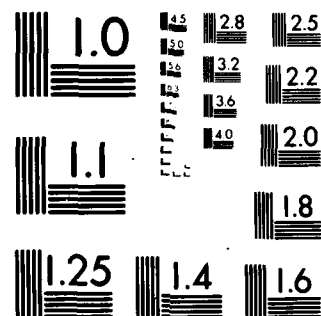
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ISRAELI ATTITUDES ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND ON PEACE TERMS.

This memorandum summarizes an assessment of Israeli public opinion on the U.S. commitment and on issues in the peace negotiation process. Results are based on two nationwide public opinion surveys taken in Israel during March and April 1978. ←

The major findings reported in this Research Memorandum were distributed in two briefing papers to appropriate offices in the NSC, the Department of State, and ICA. The present report adds statistical tables and supplementary data and is intended as a matter of record for future reference.

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September 5, 1978

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 6, 1980

Mr. Harry Schrecengost
Defense Technical Information
Center
Cameron Station
Alexandria, Va. 22314

Dear Mr. Schrecengost:

Permission is hereby granted to the Defense Technical Information Center to accession into its collection all the U.S. Department of State supported contract studies contained in the seven boxes obtained from the Foreign Affairs Research Documentation Center on February 6, 1980.

Permission is also granted to further disseminate these documents into the private sector through the National Technical Information Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Edward N. Lundstrom".

Edward N. Lundstrom
Research Documentation Officer
Office of External Research
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

ISRAELI ATTITUDES ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND ON PEACE TERMS

Three weeks after the March talks between President Carter and Prime Minister Begin ended in a stalemate, about half the Israeli public expressed doubts about the U.S. commitment to Israel. Israelis also overwhelmingly rejected outside security guarantees as a substitute for military control over the West Bank and predominantly opposed yielding occupied territories "on all fronts" for a peace settlement.

These were the main findings of a nationwide opinion survey of 1,200 Israelis conducted April 12-18, 1978 by Public Opinion Research of Israel (PORI). Relevant results of an earlier survey, conducted by PORI March 7-15, 1978, are also included in this paper.*

Confidence in U.S. Commitment Diminishes

In mid-April, for the first time since such soundings began, Israeli doubts about the U.S. commitment to Israel prevailed over confidence. Possibly reflecting the strained atmosphere in the aftermath of the March Carter-Begin talks, about half (52%) expressed little or no confidence in the U.S. to protect Israel's interests in peace negotiations, or, more importantly, to respond with adequate military assistance should Israel's very existence be imperiled. On this "life-and-death" issue of Israel's survival in another war with the Arabs, markedly fewer believed the U.S. would supply all necessary aid (39%) as thought the opposite (52%) (Tables 1 and 2).

Similarly, for the first time more Israelis saw U.S. Middle East policy as mainly supporting the Arab states (24%) than as pro-Israel (16%). Although a plurality (37%) continued to perceive American policy in the Middle East as "evenhanded," many Israelis tend to view this approach as unfavorable to Israel (Table 3).

The more widespread skepticism about U.S. support was consistent with Israeli media comment which, in the months preceding the survey, had been pointing to a general "rift" in U.S.-Israeli relations, the "widening gap" in peace aims, and the "similarity" of Washington and Cairo positions.

This perception of a pro-Arab tilt by the Administration was accompanied by a high level of discontent with President Carter. A mid-March poll by Gallup Israel showed that Israelis, by a 43 to 11 per

*The following briefing papers summarizing major findings of the two studies were issued earlier: "Israeli Public Opinion on U.S.-Israeli Relations and Settlement Issues Before the Begin-Carter Talks," April 5, 1978. "Israeli Public Confidence in U.S. Backing Diminishes," May 8, 1978.

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for

cent margin, believed the President sided with Egypt rather than with Israel on peace talks. And in another March poll, more than twice as many expressed dissatisfaction with the President's "attitude toward Israel" as gave him unqualified approval on this score (46-19%). At the same time, an additional one in four (27%) were "more or less" satisfied with his stance (Table 4).

Actually, President Carter's standing with the Israeli public has shown little change since measured in June 1977 when a similar proportion expressed "dissatisfaction" in apparent reaction to the President's May 26 remarks about the "right of the Palestinians to have a homeland and to be compensated for losses they have suffered."

This March the President's standing may have reflected the strains in U.S.-Israeli relations prompted by controversies over Israeli settlements in occupied lands and the interpretation of UN Resolution 242 -- tensions further exacerbated by the Administration's linking plane sales to Israel with those to Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

American Public Support Seen as Declining

Past soundings have shown that more Israelis are confident of American public than of American government support in the Middle East conflict. In March, too, by a clear 49 to 15 per cent plurality, they believed that American public opinion supports Israel rather than the Arabs. Yet this represents a sharp drop from October of last year when, a month before the Sadat visit to Jerusalem, a substantial 69 to 7 per cent majority had felt this way (Table 5).

Israelis are, in fact, sensitive to Sadat's impact on American public opinion. By a margin of 42 to 17 per cent they thought that American public support had declined as a direct result of Sadat's February visit to the U.S. That this perceived loss of support was clearly a matter of concern to Israelis was reflected in the views of some three in four (73%) who felt that American public opinion has a "great deal" (35%) or a "fair amount" (38%) of influence on U.S. Middle East policy. Among the college-educated this figure rose to 83 per cent (Tables 6 and 7).

American survey findings bear out the Israeli public's perception of a decline in American public support. Thus, Gallup polls show a decrease in the public's sympathy for Israel from 46 to 33 per cent between October 1977 and February 1978, although prevailing sentiment remained with Israel. This trend also emerged in an early April Times/CBS poll which indicated, however, that the declining support for Israel did not translate into increased backing for the Arabs.

As to the two government heads, the American public accorded a clear edge to President Sadat. More than half approved his handling of Arab-Israeli relations, while only a third endorsed the actions of Prime Minister Begin.

Sadat Retains Credibility as a Peace-Maker

For that matter in Israel, too, President Sadat enjoyed a favorable image as a peace-maker. Notwithstanding the stalemated peace process, which many in Israel viewed as the product of Sadat's abrupt suspension of the mid-January talks, in April about half the Israeli public (52%) believed that the Egyptian president sought a "true peace" with Israel. This was the same proportion as had felt that way in January, though considerably fewer than the 80 per cent who had expressed faith in Sadat's peaceful intentions in the euphoria following his historic visit to Jerusalem in November (Table 8).

Reluctance to Give up West Bank Territories

On the major peace issues of withdrawal from the West Bank and Palestinian self-determination, prevailing Israeli opinion in April supported the positions articulated by Prime Minister Begin, much as it had over the preceding year. But with respect to the interpretation of UN Resolution 242, a slim plurality took a position different from that held by the Prime Minister at the time. On this issue, which contributed to the tense atmosphere of the March Carter-Begin talks, about four Israelis in 10 (38%) felt that 242 does in fact require Israel "to withdraw from occupied territories on all fronts, including the West Bank and Gaza." Almost as many (33%), however, disagreed with this interpretation, while an unusually high proportion (29%) did not express an opinion (Table 9).

Public uncertainty about the legal implications of 242 did not, however, lead to a similar lack of consensus about giving up the disputed lands. By a 50-34 per cent margin, Israelis came out against yielding "some occupied territories on all fronts including the West Bank and Gaza" in exchange for an overall peace agreement. Similar margins had prevailed in response to comparable questions in June and July of last year, suggesting stability in Israeli views on return of occupied territories (Table 10).

In contrast to the general public, the college-educated acknowledged by a 52-28 per cent margin that Resolution 242 did in fact apply to the West Bank. And on the related issue of making territorial concessions on all fronts for a peace agreement, opinion in this group was divided (42-44%).

Given raised expectations and a more pervasive "peace atmosphere," however, Israeli public opinion might well become more amenable to making greater concessions on the West Bank than their Spring 1978 mood suggested. An intimation of this came through in December when, caught up in the goodwill generated by the Sadat Jerusalem visit, somewhat more approved than opposed yielding "considerable" West Bank territory (44% to 38%) (Table 11).

Palestinian Referendum Disapproved

While the U.S. has proposed limited self-determination for West Bank and Gaza Palestinians after a five-year interim period, prevailing Israeli opinion appeared to reject this approach. Specifically, the public opposed (49-35 per cent) granting Palestinians the right to vote "after some years" on whether or not they wish to link up with Jordan (Table 12).

The opposition to a referendum underscored the Israelis continuing reluctance to see a Palestinian homeland emerge on their borders. Many probably fear that such an entity, unless under Israel's military control, will lead to a PLO-dominated state in the West Bank and Gaza, while others may be unwilling to renounce Israel's claim to sovereignty over the area. Not even December's optimism over peace prospects diminished prevailing Israeli opposition to a Palestinian homeland. By a narrow but stable 47-38 per cent margin, Israelis at that time continued to reject a Palestinian homeland (Table 13).

New Settlements Opposed

March saw a significant shift in public attitudes toward the U.S. position that new Israeli settlements in occupied lands were an obstacle to peace. Then, nearly two-thirds (63%) of the public expressed concern that establishing such settlements in the West Bank would harm Israel's chances for a peace agreement. This represented a sharp increase over the 47 per cent who felt that way last October, when settlement issues were not prominently in the public eye (Tables 14 and 15).

In keeping with this attitude, prevailing public opinion in March opposed the establishment of new settlements in the West Bank. This, too, represented a major shift in opinion. What in December had still been a bare majority in favor of further settlements "in Judea and Samaria" (52 to 41%), by March had become a plurality against (32 to 47%). The college-educated were even more disposed to suspend further settling (59%) than the general public (47%). Only for one Israeli in five (18%), did the importance of the settlements, whether for security or historical reasons, loom so large that, even though acknowledged as an obstacle to peace, he still preferred to go ahead with them (Tables 16 and 17).

In retreating from advocating new settlements, many in the Israeli public probably reacted to the considerable adverse commentary evoked by their government's settlement policy. During January and February, the U.S. had several times restated American opposition to Israel's continued settlement activity, calling it among other things "contrary to international law."

While predominantly opposed to establishing new settlements, the Israeli public took a different view of existing ones. By a 46 to 35

per cent margin, Israelis rejected giving up those in the Rafa area of northern Sinai even as a "condition for peace with Egypt." In January a similar proportion had disapproved of returning to Egypt the entire Sinai including the strategic Rafa area (Tables 18 and 19).

Lack of Confidence in Outside Security Guarantees

Underlying the reluctance of many Israelis to endorse concessions on the most prominent peace issues is a well known unwillingness to relinquish Israel's control over its own security. Thus, in April, the Israeli public spurned by a 10 to one margin (84 to 8%) "outside guarantees and other security measures" as an adequate substitute for Israel's military control of the West Bank. Moreover, in January, even when the issue was put specifically in terms of a U.S. guarantee, seven Israelis in 10 had little or no confidence that "such a guarantee would protect Israel against an attack of the Arab countries" (Tables 20 and 21).

This particular public concern may reflect views articulated in some Israeli government circles, that, given the brevity and intensity of a Middle East war and the complexities of the American constitutional processes, the U.S. would probably have only a very limited capability to live up to its guarantees should Israel's "indefensible" borders be breached.

Table 1. U.S. PROTECTION OF ISRAELI INTERESTS

"In negotiations for a peace settlement, how much confidence do you have in the U.S. to protect Israel's interests -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?"

	<u>April 1978 (1200)</u>	<u>December 1977* (1202)</u>	<u>April 1977 (1210)</u>
Great deal	10	20%	13%
Fair amount	32 }42%	48 }68%	35 }48%
Not very much	33	17	32
None at all	19 }52	7 }24	11 }43
Don't know	<u>6</u> 100%	<u>7</u> 99%	<u>10</u> 101%

***Wording varied: "At a Geneva Conference, how much confidence would you have in the U.S. to protect Israel's interests -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?"**

Table 2. THE U.S. COMMITMENT

"In the event our country's existence were actually imperiled in another war with the Arabs, how far do you think the U.S. would be likely to go in providing support -- give us only diplomatic and moral support, give us limited military aid, give us all necessary military aid short of troops, or intervene with U.S. troops?"

	April 1978 (1200)	Oct. 1977 (1205)	Sept. 1977 (1204)	June 1977 (1210)	Aug.-Sept. 1975 (1188)	April 1975 (1206)	Dec. 1974 Jan. 1975 (1213)
Would be neutral, step aside (VOL.)	8%	5%	3%	8%	5%	3%	4%
Provide diplomatic and moral support	5 } 52%	6 } 44%	4 } 37%	7 } 41%	7 } 34%	5 } 31%	6 } 27%
Provide limited military aid	39	33	30	26	22	23	17
Provide all necessary military aid short of troops	37 } 39	44 } 46	47 } 49	44 } 46	49 } 55	56 } 62	48 } 57
Intervene with U.S. troops	2	2	2	2	6	6	9
Don't know	<u>10</u> 101%	<u>10</u> 100%	<u>14</u> 100%	<u>13</u> 100%	<u>11</u> 100%	<u>8</u> 101%	<u>16</u> 100%

Table 3. U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL VS. ARAB STATES

"All things considered, do you think that the current U.S. policy in the Middle East mainly supports Israel, mainly supports the Arab states, or is it more or less evenhanded in its support?"

	March <u>1978</u> (1197)	Jan.* <u>1978</u> (1203)	Sept. <u>1977</u> (1204)	July <u>1977</u> (1199)	April <u>1977</u> (1210)	March <u>1976</u> (1203)	July <u>1975</u> (1205)	April <u>1975</u> (1206)
Mainly supports Israel	16%	16%	18%	29%	28%	25%	18%	37%
Mainly supports Arabs	24	16	21	11	11	14	19	10
Evenhanded	37	43	36	34	37	30	23	42
Neither, only its own interests (VOL.)	15	14	16	14	15	23	29	2
Don't know	<u>9</u> 101%	<u>10</u> 99%	<u>10</u> 101%	<u>12</u> 100%	<u>9</u> 100%	<u>8</u> 100%	<u>11</u> 100%	<u>10</u> 101%

*Wording varied: "Since Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, do you think that the U.S. has mainly supported Israel, mainly supported the Arabs, or has been more or less evenhanded in its support?"

Table 4. SATISFACTION WITH PRESIDENT CARTER

"Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with President Carter's attitude toward Israel?"

	March <u>1978</u> (1197)	June <u>1977</u> (1210)
Satisfied	19%	18%
More or less (VOL.)	27	19
Dissatisfied	46	48
Don't know	<u>8</u> 100%	<u>15</u> 100%

Table 5. AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

"And what about American public opinion? Do you think that American public opinion today strongly supports Israel, somewhat supports Israel, is more or less neutral, somewhat supports the Arabs, strongly supports the Arabs?"

	March 1978 (1197)	Oct. 1977 (1205)
Strongly supports Israel	20%)49%	22%)69%
Somewhat supports Israel	29)	47)
More or less neutral	24	16
Somewhat supports Arabs	13)15	6) 7
Strongly supports Arabs	2)	1)
Don't know	<u>12</u> 100%	<u>8</u> 100%

Table 6. SHIFT IN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

"Do you think that as a result of the Sadat visit to the U.S. the support of the American public for Israel has increased, decreased, or remained about the same?"

	March 1978 (1197)
Increased	17%
Same	29
Decreased	42
Don't know	<u>12</u> 100%

Table 7. INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

"How much influence do you think American public opinion has on U.S. policy in the Middle East -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?"

	<u>March 1978</u> (1197)
Great deal	35%
Fair amount	38) 73%
Not very much	8)
None at all	7) 15
Don't know	<u>12</u> 100%

Table 8. SADAT'S CREDIBILITY

"Do you believe President Sadat wants a true peace with Israel or do you believe he does not?"

	<u>April</u> <u>1978</u> (1200)	<u>January</u> <u>1978</u> (1203)	<u>December</u> <u>1977</u> (1202)	<u>October</u> <u>1975*</u> (1198)
Does want peace	52%	52%	80%	34%
Depends (VOL.)	—	—	3	—
Does not want peace	32	24	10	40
Don't know	<u>16</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>26</u>
	100%	99%	100%	100%

*Wording varied: "Does or doesn't President Sadat want peace with Israel?"

Table 9. MEANING OF UN RESOLUTION 242

"There are differences of opinion about the meaning of UN Resolution 242. Some believe that Resolution 242 requires Israel to withdraw from occupied territories on all fronts, including the West Bank and Gaza. Others believe that Resolution 242 does not apply to the West Bank and Gaza. Which view is closer to your own?"

	April 1978 (1200)
Withdrawal on all fronts, including West Bank and Gaza	38%
Does not apply to West Bank and Gaza	33
Don't know	<u>29</u>
	100%

Table 10. WILLINGNESS TO YIELD TERRITORIES ON ALL FRONTS

"If giving up some occupied territories on all fronts including the West Bank and Gaza is a necessary condition for an overall peace settlement, should Israel agree or not agree to this?"

	April 1978 (1200)	July 1977* (1199)	June 1977* (1219)
Agree (For)	34%	38%	35%
Depends (VOL.)	5	6	10
Not agree (Against)	50	46	48
Don't know	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>7</u>
	101%	100%	100%

*Wording varied: July 1977 - "Are you for or against returning a part of the territories, including Judea and Samaria, for a complete peace?"

June 1977 - "Are you for or against giving up large territories on all the borders in exchange for a full peace treaty?"

Table 11. RETURN OF WEST BANK TERRITORIES

**"Should or shouldn't Israel return considerable territories in
Judea and Samaria in exchange for a comprehensive peace treaty?"**

	December 1977 (1202)
Should	44%
Depends (VOL.)	8
Should not	38
Don't know	10
	100%

Table 12. WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT PALESTINIAN VOTE ON JORDAN LINK-UP

"It has been suggested that Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza be permitted after some years to vote on whether or not they wish to link up with Jordan. Do you think Israel should or should not agree to let the Palestinians in these territories vote on linking up with Jordan?"

April 1978
(1200)

Should agree	35%
Depends (VOL.)	2
Should not agree	49
Don't know	<u>14</u>
	100%

Table 13. PALESTINIAN HOMELAND LINKED TO JORDAN

"Do you think that in return for a real peace with the Arabs that includes normal diplomatic and trade relations, Israel should or should not agree to the establishment of a Palestinian homeland linked to Jordan?"

	<u>Dec.*</u> <u>1977</u> (1202)	<u>Oct.</u> <u>1977</u> (1205)	<u>September</u> <u>1977</u> (1204)
Should agree	38%	31%	38%
Depends (VOL)	5	3	4
Should not agree	47	56	49
Don't know	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>
	101%	100%	100%

* Wording varied: "...linked closely to Jordan?"

Table 14. EFFECT OF WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS ON PEACE CHANCES

"Do you think that if Israel establishes additional settlements on the West Bank it will or will not prove to be a major obstacle to a peace settlement?"

	<u>March 1978</u> (1197)
Will	55%
Maybe (VOL.)	8
Will not	28
Don't know	<u>10</u>
	101%

Table 15. EFFECT OF SETTLEMENTS ON PEACE CHANCES

"Do you think that if Israel continued to establish additional settlements in occupied territories it will or will not have a harmful effect on chances for a peace settlement with the Arabs?"

	<u>October</u> <u>1977</u> (1205)
Will	47%
Will not	36
Positive effect (VOL.)	6)42%
Don't know	<u>12</u>
	101%

Table 16. FURTHER SETTLEMENTS ON WEST BANK*

	March 1978 (1197)	January 1978 (1203)	December 1977 (1202)
Should continue settlements	32%	46%	52%
Depends (VOL.)	5	3	5
Should not continue settlements	47	41	41
Don't know	16**	11	3
	100%	101%	101%

*Question wordings:

March 1978: (Those who believed additional settlements on West Bank "will" or "may" prove an obstacle to a peace settlement): "Even though additional West Bank settlements may prove a major obstacle to peace, do you think Israel should still go ahead with them or should it not?"

(Those who believed additional settlements "will not" prove an obstacle to a peace settlement): "In your opinion should Israel establish additional settlements on the West Bank or should it not?"

January 1978: "Should or shouldn't settling in Judea and Samaria be continued even if it might harm peace chances?"

December 1977: "Should or shouldn't we continue with settlements in Judea and Samaria?"

**Includes those Israelis with "no opinion" on question of whether additional settlements will prove a "major obstacle to a peace settlement."

Table 17. ADDITIONAL WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

THOSE WHO BELIEVED ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS ON WEST BANK "WILL" OR "MAY" PROVE AN OBSTACLE TO A PEACE SETTLEMENT WERE ASKED: "Even though additional West Bank settlements may prove a major obstacle to peace, do you think Israel should still go ahead with them or should it not?"

THOSE WHO BELIEVED ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS "WILL NOT" PROVE AN OBSTACLE TO A PEACE SETTLEMENT WERE ASKED: "In your opinion should Israel establish additional settlements on the West Bank or should it not?"

Opinion on Additional Settlements	March 1978		Total Sample *
	"Will" "May" Prove Obstacle to Peace	"Will Not" Prove Obstacle to Peace	
No. of Cases	(754)	(335)	(1197)
Should continue set- tlements	18%	75%	32%
Maybe (VOL.)	8	2	5
Should not	67	17	47
Don't know	8	6	16
	101%	100%	100%

*Includes those Israelis with "no opinion" on question of whether additional settlements will prove a "major obstacle to a peace settlement."

Table 18. GIVING UP SETTLEMENTS IN RAFA SALIENT OF SINAI

"Are you for or against relinquishing the Israeli settlements in the Rafa area if this will be the condition for peace with Egypt?"

March 1978
(1197)

For	35%
Maybe (VOL.)	6
Against	46
Don't know	<u>13</u>
	100%

Table 19. RETURN OF SINAI TO EGYPT

"Do you or don't you support the government peace suggestion to return to Egypt all the Sinai including the Rafa area and Sharm-a-Sheik?"

January
1978
(1203)

Support	32%
Sharm-Yes, Rafa-No (VOL.)	8
Rafa-Yes, Sharm-No (VOL.)	2
Depends (VOL.)	4
Oppose	42
Don't know	<u>12</u>
	100%

Table 20. OUTSIDE GUARANTEES VS. ISRAELI MILITARY CONTROL

"Do you feel that maintaining Israeli military control over the West Bank is essential for Israel's security, or do you think that adequate security could be provided by outside guarantees and other security measures?"

	<u>April 1978</u> (1200)
Israeli military control essential	84%
Guarantees and other security measures adequate	8
Don't know	<u>7</u>
	99%

Table 21. CONFIDENCE IN U.S. GUARANTEES

"Suppose that as part of a final peace settlement with the Arab countries, the U.S. agreed to guarantee Israel's security. How much confidence do you have that such a guarantee would protect Israel against an attack of the Arab countries -- great deal, fair amount, not very much, none at all?"

	<u>January</u> <u>1978</u> (1203)
Great deal	5%) 20%
Fair amount	15)
Not very much	26) 70
None at all	44)
Don't know	<u>10</u> 100%

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